

Date: 2/10/14
To: Finance & Advisory Board (FAB)
From: Rachel Meredith-Warren, FAB Member
Re: CoA Dept. Analysis

Dept. Name: Stoneham Council on Aging

Dept. Head: Maureen Canova, Director

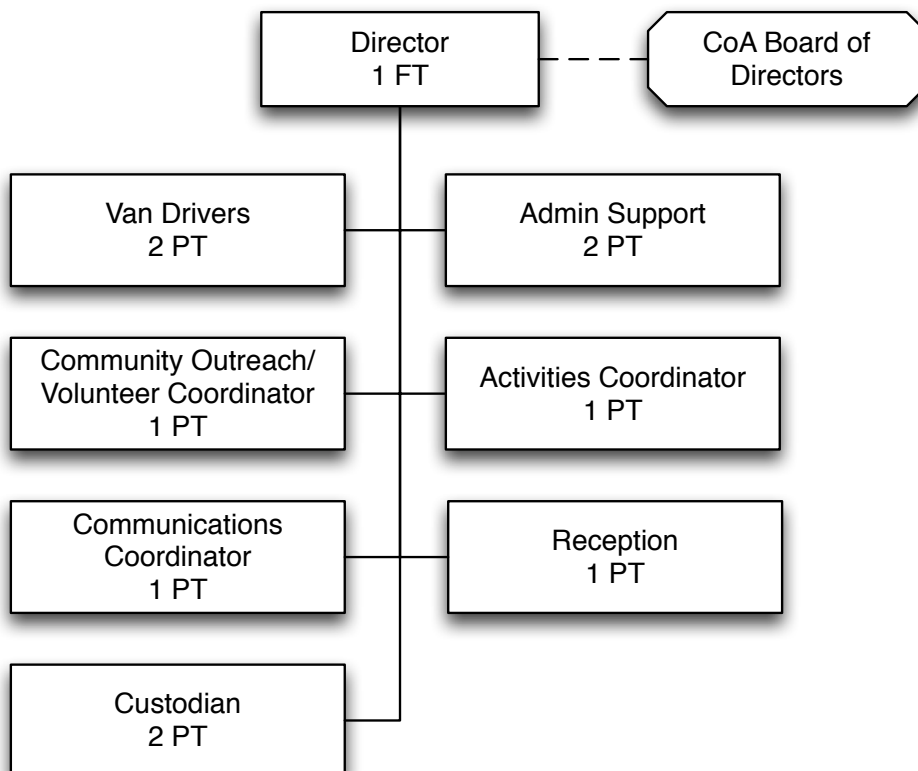
Summary:

The CoA serves 900 clients each week, an increase of 48% since 2009. It is a well performing, underfunded department providing critical services to allow seniors to age in place in their community.

For FY15, the CoA has sought to build upon recent successes by expanding the availability of three existing part time staff. In the proposed FY15 budget presented to the Board of Selectmen two weeks ago, the CoA was allocated \$6k (or 25%) of a requested \$25k increase in personnel that would enable this improved staffing. The current proposed budget would allow the department to increase the availability of one staff member instead of three.

Department Staffing Levels:

As the diagram below shows, the CoA staff is made up of a director who was recently brought into full time status, and group of part time workers. The director is supported by an advisory board of directors.



Services:

CoA provides social supports, health services, nutritious meals, and personal financial, legal and health care assistance. The CoA enables frail and at-risk seniors to age with dignity and independence in their community. See stonehamseniorcenter.org for program listings.

The CoA serves 900 clients each week. This marks an increase of 48% since the new director came into her role in 2009. This improvement is attributed to fuller and more diversified program offerings.

Funding:

The CoA is funded by a mix of local/municipal, state and private sources.

The Town budget allocation (Dept 541) for the CoA funds personnel and operating costs of the Senior Center building and grounds. The Town does **not** fund CoA programs.

Under current management, the CoA has never exceeded its budget allocation from the town. When the budget has been exhausted, the CoA has turned to private sources to supplement its operations and personnel.

The CoA regards its pursuit of diverse funding sources as highly important. Their expectation is that any Town funds should and are leveraged to secure other sources of funding.

In order to pursue diverse funding sources, in 2011, CoA supporters set up a tax exempt 501(c)(3) organization known as the Senior Center Friends of Stoneham, Inc. Senior Center Friends raises approximately \$20,000 each year, primarily through its “barn sale”/rummage sale which operates in the warmer months of the year.

How Stoneham's Funding Compares To Neighboring Communities

The table below shows that the Stoneham CoA is notably underfunded compared to neighboring communities, receiving 25% less than even its closest peer in funding.

	CoA Allocation in Municipal Budget		
			Details
Stoneham	\$104k	FY14	Personnel & Op
Reading	\$194k	FY13	" (waiting on FY14 figures)
Melrose	\$166k	FY14	"
North Reading	\$140k	FY14	"
Winchester	\$231k	FY14	Personnel, Other Exp., Equip.
Wakefield	\$200k	FY14	Personnel & Op

Overall Human Service Spending

The table below shows that, with the exception of the outlying figure set by Melrose, Stoneham's overall human services spending is not wholly inconsistent with neighboring communities, but our Town's human service funding is low compared to surrounding communities. In fact, Stoneham has spent the least within its peer group.

	Human Services Spending (2012)*			
	% of Gen Fund	Per Capita	\$	Population
Stoneham	0.68	18.67	400,326	21,437
Reading	0.61	24.06	595,508	24,747
Melrose	1.8	49.37	1,332,078	26,983
North Reading	1.13	36.61	545,140	14,892
Winchester	0.58	21.59	461,535	21,374
Wakefield	0.73	17.11	426,597	24,932

Interdepartmental Efficiency

The CoA has formed a close working relationship with the Stoneham Housing Authority. The two departments have a natural affinity as both serve elders.

* Human Services spending is an aggregated figure. It was retrieved on January 26, 2014 from Massachusetts Dept. of Revenue, Municipal Actual Revenues and Expenditures, General Fund Expenditures, FY2012. The aggregated figure includes Health Services, Clinical Services, Special Program, Veteran's Services and other.

Efficiency Challenges

Consistent staffing over the course of operating hours is a major challenge. A prime example of this is asking volunteers to answer incoming phone inquiries.

At first glance, this seems an excellent cost savings strategy. In reality, important events unfold and impact every day. A typical volunteer is available for a few hours (e.g. a single morning or afternoon) each week.

A “quilt like” roster of many different people, with varying skill levels and training needs are used to provide phone coverage. Scheduling many people to cover this role means that the person who covers the Monday morning shift cannot adequately transfer their current knowledge to the person covering the Thursday afternoon shift.

When a Stoneham elder calls to ask a question, if volunteers cover the phones, it’s impossible to guarantee that a fully informed agent greets their call and connects them to the needed services.

This is important in terms of failing to provide critical services. It also results in poor efficiency of service delivery, frustration for all involved and tarnishing the public perception of the CoA.

FY15 Town Budget

The CoA anticipates requesting a \$23,000 (25%) increase in Town funding in FY15 would allow them to fund additional time for three existing part time positions; increasing the availability of the community outreach worker, receptionist and administrative assistant. These staff members are in direct contact with the public and support operations and programming.

Funding at this level would allow the CoA to serve our elders at a level comparable to elders in neighboring communities.

What Is a Council On Aging?

Retrieved on January 15, 2014 from:

<http://www.mass.gov/elders/service-orgs-advocates/coa/overview-of-councils-on-aging.html>

“Councils on Aging (COAs) are the community focal point for social and support services to elders, families and caregivers in 349 cities and towns in Massachusetts. These municipal agencies develop priorities, serve as advocates and offer opportunities to access programs, services and activities that directly benefit more than 540,000 elders, families and caregivers annually.

COAs conduct more than 100 programs from information and referral, outreach, transportation, meals (congregate and/or home delivered) to health screening, health insurance information benefits counseling (SHINE), fitness, recreation, computer access, education/life long learning, among others. In most

communities, COAs serve as the only public social service agency and assist numerous non-elders in accessing public benefits. They may also serve as a link to and support for elders and others in case of local emergencies.

Each COA determines its own priorities based on unique local circumstances, resources and interests. Volunteers play an integral service role, with more than 31,000 persons recording almost 50,000 hours per week of volunteer support. Regardless of design, a local senior center is often a home away from home for socializing, learning, wellness, "giving back" or just a reason to get out of the house. For the rapidly growing elder population, now totaling nearly 1.3 million elders, COAs and senior centers provide a safe place for Massachusetts elders to remain independent, productive and in the community for as long as possible."